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# The Book That Surfaced Britain's 'Fourth Man'

By PHILIP REVZIN

It's mole hunting season in Britain.

This past fall the whole country, it seemed, was riveted to the seven-part BBC television adaptation of John le Carré's novel "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy." Everyone was waiting for the marvelously laconic George Smiley (Alec Guinness) to outwit the cunning Russian agent who had burrowed to the top of the Circus, as the British Secret Service is termed in Mr. le Carré's fiction.

For the past couple of weeks the drama has been re-run, though not on the BBC.

## The Bookshelf

This time there's a real mole, Anthony Blunt, an ex-Knight and formerly the Queen's art adviser, unmasked as a traitor after more than a quarter century. Mr. Blunt's innocuous recent past—he says he quit helping the Russians in 1951, confessed to the British in 1964 and turned from spying to studying the French painter Nicolas Poussin—has done little to quell the furious reaction to his unmasking.

There has already been an emergency debate in Parliament, calls for a full inquiry into Mr. Blunt's past and the current running of the intelligence services, and a

continuing stream of newspaper stories with any new fact about "The Spy at the Palace."

Why the fury now over spying that ended more than 20 years ago? And why all the excitement if, as Mr. Blunt insists, all he did out of youthful enthusiasm for Soviet communism was to give the Russians information about the Nazis that the Russians, our wartime allies, should have gotten anyway?

The reasons for the uproar include complex matters of class, abhorrence of betrayal of Queen and country, and perhaps a little collective shame about the circle of upper-class English gentlemen who spied for the Russians.

Many of these reasons are illuminated strikingly by a new book, Andrew Boyle's "The Climate of Treason," which led directly to Mr. Blunt's undoing. The American edition, titled "The Fourth Man," will be published in January by Dial Press. Mr. Boyle, a former BBC journalist and a noted biographer, has been working for the past few years on the Philby-Burgess-Maclean case.

These three traitors all fled to Russia when found out (Burgess died in Moscow in 1963, the other two are presumed to still be in Russia), tipped off by a shadowy Fourth Man. The fourth man has been for years the favored story of newspaper editors with nothing better to run on a slow summer Sunday. Past articles have named a variety of dead Cambridge professors and students as the collaborator.

Mr. Boyle doesn't name Mr. Blunt as the fourth man in the book, preferring the pseudonym Maurice to comply with Britain's strict libel laws. He does drop a lot of hints, however, and freely sprinkles Mr. Blunt's name about. It didn't take much for a magazine to catch on, and when questions were asked in Parliament, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher revealed all.

The book, however, does much more than solve a long-standing riddle (and pose a new one: the real identity of "Basil," the Fifth Man who helped the other four). It also paints a convincing picture of the sterility of the public school and Cambridge upbringing of Britain's future leaders between the wars, fertile plantations for astute Russian "talent spotters."

The atmosphere was of political and economic confusion. Britain had lost its empire and was nearing economic collapse. The sympathies of the Prince of Wales, later briefly Edward VIII, with the budding Nazi regime in Germany were barely hidden. The Cliveden Set was tilting upper-class opinion toward the Germans.

Against this the Soviet Communist experiment seemed to many not just a way to stop fascism, but a just path to economic recovery. The conversion of many Cambridge students and teachers to communism was profound. Mr. Boyle points out. Some were deterred by Stalin; a few persisted. By their lights Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and Anthony Blunt were simply being true to their consciences and their friends by sticking with the Russians. "This was a case of political conscience against loyalty to country; I chose conscience," Mr. Blunt said last week.

Mr. Boyle's sketch of Cambridge life makes such a statement plausible, although no more acceptable to current outraged public opinion. The arrogance of class, rampant at Cambridge and Oxford

during the Thirties, has led to old class wounds being reopened by the Blunt affair. Labor Party politicians want to know why less well-connected traitors have been jailed for 40 years while Mr. Blunt was merely stripped of his knighthood. They also want assurances that all the moles have been unearthed, an assurance Mr. Boyle isn't yet prepared to give.

And while Mr. Blunt's royal connection isn't deemed very significant (he was concerned more with Gainsborough than any official secrets at the palace) many Britons feel he directly betrayed and embarrassed the Queen. This view is tempered, however, by some politicians who think Mr. Blunt became a double agent after 1964 and has been feeding the Russians misinformation since. They figure that his job at the palace helped convince the Russians that he hadn't yet been found out.

The latter half of Mr. Boyle's book takes the spies out of Cambridge and into their shadowy world. Besides being a true-life spy thriller to rival Mr. le Carré's novels, Mr. Boyle's narrative provides a good case for taking the treason seriously. While Britain might not have had all that many secrets worth knowing, the U.S., busily building the atom bomb, did, and shared many of them with the British. These were easily passed to the Russians by their well-placed infiltrators.

Still, nobody claims that Anthony Blunt was working for the Russians up until he was revealed recently, and the outcry does include a large measure of helpless vengeance. Mr. Boyle is convinced that the hot-house of 1930s Cambridge is gone forever. The book concludes: "The deplorable conditions of that period, giving rise to the distemper which turned future pillars of the establishment into spies, then into transitory pseudo-heroes of the Soviet Union, have long since passed away. Like debris on the ebb tide of change, they have been swept out to sea, never to return."

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